

Message Text

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ACTION AGRE-00

INFO OCT-01 EA-09 ISO-00 EB-08 SS-15 SP-02 NSC-05 CIAE-00
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CIEP-02 TRSE-00 DODE-00 /062 W
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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3529
INFO USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 HONG KONG 1007

FOR AGRICULTURE, FAS, ERS
FROM AGRICULTURAL OFFICER

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAGR, CH
SUBJECT: CHINA ACCELERATES AGRICULTURAL MECHANIZATION

REF: (A) TOFAS 173 (HK 10978) OF SEPT. 18, 1975
(B) 76 HONG KONG 14927

BEING SUMMARY: A BASIC AGRICULTURAL POLICY INITIATIVE FOR
CHINA'S CURRENT FIVE-YEAR PLAN (1976-80), STRONGLY
LAUNCHED AT OCTOBER 1975 TACHAI CONFERENCE AND REEMPHASIZED
AT SECOND TACHAI CONFERENCE OF DECEMBER 1976, CALLS FOR
ACHIEVEMENT AT AGRICULTURAL MECHANIZATION "IN THE MAIN"
BY 1980, A DATA SET BY CHAIRMAN MAO BACK IN THE 1950'S.
PREMIER HUA KUO-FENG, VICE PREMIER CH'EN YUNG-KUEI AND
OTHER KEY FIGURES HAVE STRESSED IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS
OF SHARPLY IMPROVED AND EXPANDED AGRICULTURAL MACHANIZATION.
NEW STRESS NOW PLACED ON ROLE OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN
MANUFACTURE OF LARGE MACHINESE AND AIDING LOCAL AUTHORITIES
IN FINANCING PRODUCTION OF MEDIUM- AND SMALL-SIZED MACHINESE
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WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION GIVEN VARYING NEEDS OF DIFFERENT
LOCALITIES.

AMONG BENEFITS ENVISAGED FROM EXPANDED MECHANIZATION
WILL BE RELEASE OF RURAL MANPOWER TO PERFORM RURAL AND
OTHER AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL TASKS AND STRENGTHENING
OF WORKER-PEASANT ALLIANCE. PROBLEMS INCLUDE COMPETITION
FROM OTHER ECONOMIC SECTORS AND THE MILITARY FOR LIMITED

AVAILABILITIES OF IRON AND STEEL, AND TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES
IN DESIGN AND MANUFACTURE OF AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY.

END SUMMARY.

1. AT 1975 TACHAI CONFERENCE ONE OF MAJOR TASKS SET FOR
CHINA'S AGRICULTURAL SECTOR WAS ACHIEVEMENT OF MECHANIZATION
"IN THE MAIN" BY 1980. THAT GOAL WAS MUCH DISCUSSED, AND
SOME PROGRESS MADE, IN INTERIM BEFORE RECENT (DECMBER 1976)
TACHAI CONFERENCE WHERE IT WAS AGAIN STRESSED. MECHANIZATION
GOAL HAS NOT BEEN SUBJECT OF RECENT, LENGTHY PRESS RELEASE
(NCNA JAN. 15, 1977).

2. A NUMBER OF POINTS MADE IN NCNA RELEASE MERIT COMMENT:
(A) IN PROMOTING AGRICULTURAL MECHANIZATION, CHINA'S POLICY
IS TO "BRING INTO FULL PLAY INITIATIVE OF BOTH CENTRAL AND
LOCAL AUTHORITIES" WITH STRESS ON LOCAL INITIATIVE,
PARTICULARLY IN THE ACCUMULATION OF FUNDS REQUIRED TO
ESTABLISH FARM MACHINERY MANUFACTURING PLANTS. COMMENT: PRO
POLICY SINCE BEGINNING OF CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN 1966 HAS
STRESSED SELF-RELIANCE. FOR EXAMPLE, IN ITS EDITORIAL OF
DEC. 23, 1976 (ORIGINALLY INTENDED FOR PUBLICATION IN 1971),
PEOPLE'S DAILY STRESSED THAT FARM MACHINERY MANUFACTURE
SHOULD TAKE PLACE PRIMARILY AT LOCAL LEVEL -- WHETHER IT
BE AT PROVINCIAL, DISTRICT, COUNTY, COMMUNE OR BRIGADE LEVEL.
SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON "CENTRAL INITIATIVE" IN NCNA JAN. 15
RELEASE APPEARS INDICATE CHANGE IN EARLIER OVERWHELMING STRESS
ON SELF-RELIANCE. NEW DEPENDENCE ON "CENTRAL" SUPPORT ALSO
NOTED IN VICE PREMIER CH'EN YUNG-KUEI'S REPORT OF DEC. 20,
1976 AT TACHAI CONFERENCE IN WHICH HE EMPHASIZED "STATE AID"
TO THE PROVINCE TO DEVELOP LOCAL IRON-AND-STEEL AND OTHER
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AGRICULTURAL-SUPPORT INDUSTRIES. THESE REFERENCE APPEAR
INDICATE THAT LOCAL SELF-RELIANCE MUST BE SUPPLEMENTED
WITH "OUTSIDE" SUPPORT (I.E. CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT)
IF IMPLEMENTATION OF AGRICULTURAL MECHANIZATION IS TO BE
ACCELERATED. AND THAT APPEARS TO BE A MAJOR CHANGE IN
CHINA'S LONG-STANDING POLICY OF SELF-RELIANCE. (REF B).

3. OTHER POINTS: (B) AS A RULE, CENTRAL AUTHORITIES WILL
BE RESPONSIBLE FOR PRODUCTION OF LARGE FARM MACHINES AND
LOCAL AUTHORITIES FOR MEDIUM- AND SMALL-SIZED MACHINES.
COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THIS IS ALREADY ESTABLISHED PRACTICE,
SPECIAL MENTION OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ROLE IN MANUFACTURE
OF BIG MACHINES APPEARS INDICATE GREATER EMPHASIS ON THAT
LEVEL OF PRODUCTION IN FUTURE. (C) CURRENT POLICY DICTATES
THAT PRIORITY BE GIVEN TO URGENT NEEDS OF EACH LOCALITY
WHICH, UNDERSTANDABLY, DIFFER GREATLY FROM AREA TO AREA
(E.G., IRRIGATION AND DRAINAGE MACHINERY IN NORTH AND
RICE TRANSPLANTERS AND HARVESTERS IN SOUTH). COMMENT: IN
1960'S MAJOR TASK FOR SOUTH WAS PRODUCTION OF IRRIGATION

AND DRAINAGE MACHINERY FOR PADDY FIELDS. WITH THAT PROBLEM APPARENTLY UNDER CONTROL, EMPHASIS NOW ON PROVIDING MORE EFFICIENT MACHINERY FOR RICE TRANSPLANTING AND HARVESTING. MORE

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4. SEVERAL STATISTICS WERE HIGHLIGHTED: (D) PLANTS FOR PRODUCTING TRACTORS, WALKING TRACTORS, ENGINES AND MOTORS HAVE BEEN SET UP IN ALMOST ALL PROVINCE-LEVEL UNITS AND REPAIR AND MANUFACTURING FACILITIES IN 96 PERCENT OF CHINA'S (APPROX. 2,100) COUNTIES. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THESE A STATISTICS APPEAR IMPRESSIVE, THERE IS UNDOUBTEDLY A LARGE GAP BETWEEN MOST ADVANCED AND MOST BACKWARD AREAS WHICH IS UNLIKELY TO BE NARROWED GREATLY IN NEXT FOUR YEARS. ALSO: (E) NCNA CLAIMED THAT CHINA IN 1976 PRODUCED 5.6 TIMES AS MANY TRACTORS AND "NEARLY 71 TIMES" AS MANY WALKING TRACTORS AS IN 1965. COMENT: IN 1975, TRACTOR NUMBER WERE 4.7 TIMES 1965 (CNS, JUNE 29, 1976); IN 1965, THE NUMBER OF "STANDARD TRACTORS" (15-HP UNITS) WAS CLAIMED AT 6.96 TIMES 1956" (NCNA, APRIL 12, 1966); AND IN 1956, ACCORDING TO TEN GREAT YEARS, THERE WERE 19,367 STANDARD UNITS, WITH THOSE RELATIONSHIPS, FOLLOWING DATA MAY BE DERIVED FOR CHINA'S TRACTOR PARK (IN 15-HP UNITS): 1956 -- 19,367 UNITS; 1965 -- 134,790 UNITS; 1975 -- 633,500 UNITS; AND 1976 -- 754,800 UNITS. ALTHOUGH PRODUCTION APPARENTLY NOW INCREASING IMPRESSIVELY, THAT LEVEL IS STILL SOME 250-450,000 UNITS SHORT OF THE 1.0-1.2 MILLION UNITS REQUIRED FOR "BASIC MECHANIZATION OF MAJOR FARM TASKS", A TARGET

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PUBLISHED IN PEOPLE'S DAILY, DEC. 22, 1962. WALKING TRACTORS APPARENTLY ARE NOT INCLUDED IN 15-HP UNIT DATA, BUT THEIR NUMBER ALSO ARE INCREASING RAPIDLY.

5. ANOTHER STATISTIC IN NCNA'S JAN. 15 RELEASE: (F) CHINA HAS "WELL OVER 10 MILLION TRACTOR DEIVERS AND FARM MACHINE OPERATORS -- PART OF CHINA'S FIRST GENERATION OF PEASANTSWELL-VERSED IN MODERN TECHNIQUES." COMMENT: THE NUMBERS ARE IMPRESSIVE BUT THE DISTRIBUTION (UNKNOWN) IS THE KEY; I.E., SOME AREAS MAY HAVE SHORTAGE AND OTHERS, SURPLUS, OF TRAINED OPERATORS.

6. GENERAL COMMENTS: IN LATE 1950'S CHAIRMAN MAO FIRST CALLED MECHANIZATION "THE FUNDAMENTAL WAY OUT FOR CHINA'S AGRICULTURE" AND SET 1980 (I.E. 25 YEARS FROM 1955) AS THE TARGET YEAR TO ACHIEVE "BASIC MECHANIZATION." SUBSEQUENT STATEMENTS AND WRITINGS POINTED TO BENEFITS OF INCREASING PRUDCTIVITY OF EACH FARM LABORER HTEREBY RELEASING LABOR FOR INDUSTRY AND OTHER AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES. AT 1975 CONFERENCE, HUA KUO-FENG STATED THAT IF 70 PERCENT OF MAJOR FARM OPERATIONS WERE MECHANIZED BY 1980, ONE-HALF OF RURAL CHINA'S LABOR FORCE WOULD BE RELIVED OF BASIC FARM CHORES, FREE TO DEVELOP LOCAL INDUSTRIES AND TO PERFORM OTHER TASKS AIMED AT INCREASING YEIDLIS AND PRODUCTION.

7. IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF AGRICULTRAL MECHANIZATION ALSO CONSIDERABLE. E.G. (A) WOULD INCREASE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR'S DEPENDENCE ON INDUSTRY, HUTS STREGTHENING ALLIANCE OF WORKERS AND PEASANTS; AND (B) PURCHASE OF FARM MACHINERY AT BRIGADE AND COMMUNE LEVELS SERVES TO STRENGTHEN COLLECTIVE ECONOMY AND CON- COMITANTLY TO WEAKEN CAPITALISTIC TENDENCIES IN COUNTRYSIDE.

8. EXPANDED MECHANIZATION WILL BENEFIT CHINA'S AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION. ALTHOUGH USE OF MACHINERY DOES NOT, PER SE, INCREASE CROP YEIDLIS, IT GREATLY SHORTENS THE TIME INTERVAL

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BETWEEN TWO SUCCESSIVE CROPS THROUGH ACCELERATED HARVESTING OF THE FIRST CROP AND FASTER PLANTING OF THE SECOND. WITH A LONGER GROWING SEASON AVAILAABLE FOR THE SECOND CROP, EXPANDED DOUBLE-CROPPING BECOMES BOTH FEASIBLE AND PROFITABLE. OTHER BENEFITS: (A) WITH POWER PUMPS AVAILABLE, IRRIGATION AND DRAINAGE OPERATIONS CAN BE MORE TIMELY; E.G., QUICK DRAINING OF WATERLOGGED FIELDS WILL GREATLY MINIMIZE ADVERSE

EFFECTS ON YIELDS; (B) IN COUTBREAKS OF PLANT DISEASE OR INSECT INFESTATION, AGRICULTURAL CHEMICALS CAN BE APPLIED MORE RAPIDLY WITH MACHINESE THAN WITH MANUALLY OPERATED DEVICES -- AND WITH LESS RESULTANT CROP DAMAGE; AND (C) IN UNDERTAKING LARGE-SCALE LAND IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS, WHICH HAVE ANNUALLY INVOLVED MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED MILLION PEASANTS IN RECENT YEARS, MACHINERY CAN DO A NUMBER OF TASKS BETTER THAN HUMANS.

9. MECHANIZATION ALSO WILL GIVE RISE TO MANY PROBLEMS. A MAJOR ONE IS, ANDWILL BE, AVAILABLILITY OF IRON AND STEEL. (SEE REF A). STATE AID SHOULD HELP, BUT THERE WILL BE COMPETITION FROM OTHER ECONOMIC SECTORS AND FROM THE MILITARY FOR LIMITED SUPPLIES. THERE ARE ALSO MANY TECHNICAL PROBLEMS IN THE DESIGN AND MANUFACTURE OF MACHINERY TO MEET WIDELY DIFFERING REGIONAL AND LOCAL CONDITIONS AS WELL AS THE SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS CREATED BY INTERCROPPING NOW SO WIDELY ADOPTED IN CHINA. BUT THE COMMITMENT IS THERE AND THE 1980 GOAL WILL BE STRONGLY PURSUED.

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